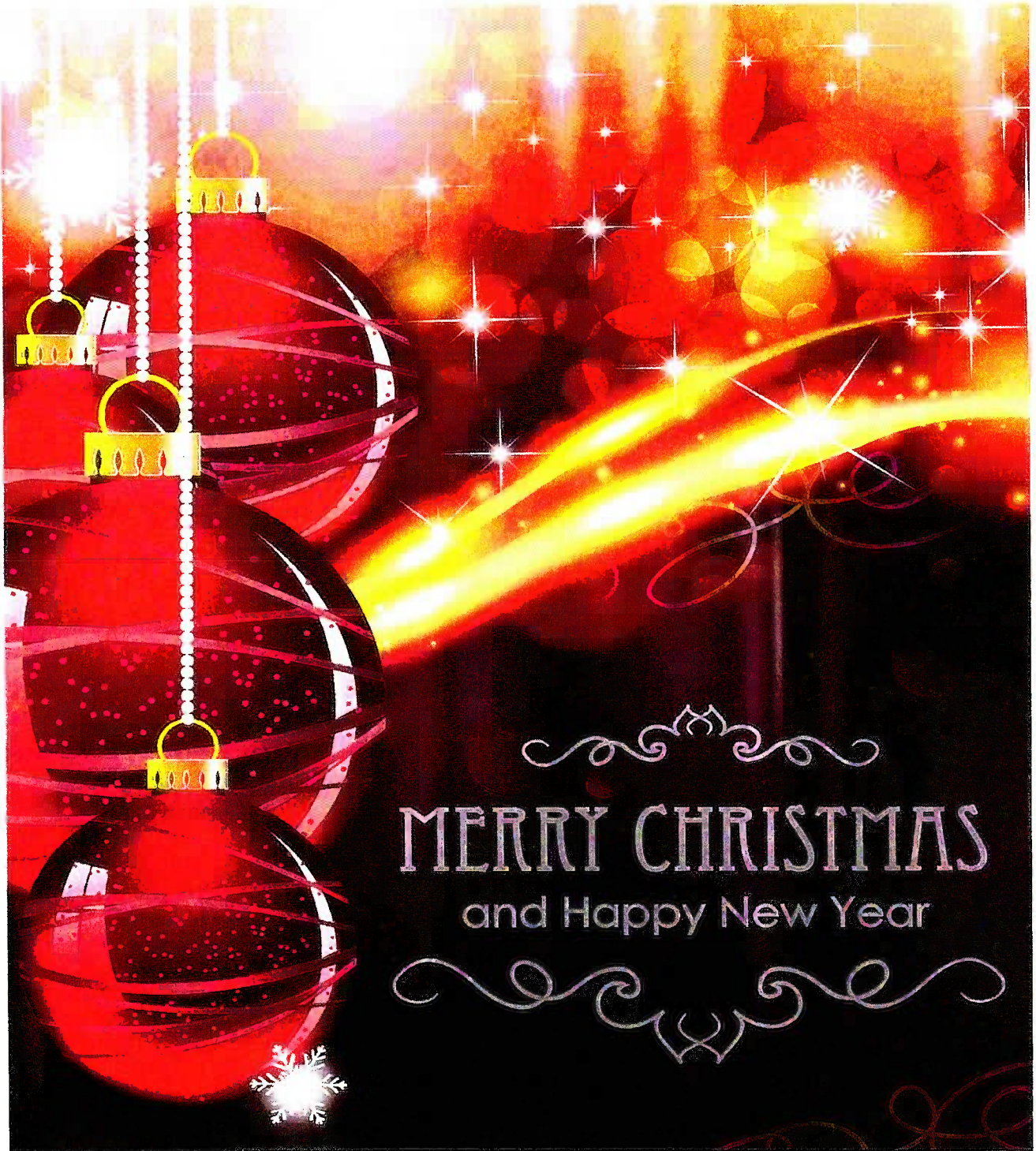


THE CHRONICLE

Aston Abbotts Parish Magazine



EDITORIAL

THE CHRONICLE

Issue 347

December 2014

Another year gone by, with the usual events in the village. Most publications at this time of year just summarise the previous year's events, so here goes:

Village Fete, Village Ball and Fireworks all great events, thanks to all those that give their time to organise these successful events so important to village life. Having been involved in Astonbury for many years I know and appreciate the commitment involved in getting these things off the ground, talking of which, come on Ches what about Astonbury unplugged!

So that's the Premier league dealt with, to the lesser events, runner bean and pumpkin competitions, ably organised and won by regular correspondent and media star Simon Guy, (for once his allotment partner won't mind being excluded) do these competitions smack of some sort of FIFA type corruption?

Alas no controversy over the "dung heap" this year, I wonder what did happen to it. It must have been delivered and distributed, if that's what you do with dung. Given the level of debate last year perhaps the various protagonists could bring peace to the middle east!

Finally thanks to all of our contributors, both regular and occasional, and those that distribute and help get the Chronicle delivered throughout the village, and to the village feel free to contribute to the Chronicle, be it letters, articles or just news you want to get out.

All that left is to say have a wonderful Christmas, a successful new year and don't be shy or hesitate to buy your Editor a drink over the festive period.

Phil Corrigan

December
2014

Snippets & Miscellanea

Royal Oak News

Roast lunches every Sunday,
recommended that you book.

Open Xmas Day for drinks 12-3

Boxing Day drink & Food

Ellie & tom (16 years old) are available for
babysitting, dog sitting and walking, looking
after all animals from horses to hamsters, plus
lawn mowing and odd jobs. Phone 681182

The Xmas show fund were very pleased to again contribute to the firework display organised by Kevin Copping. it was a really well organised event and seemed to be enjoyed by all those who attended. Well done to Kevin and his team especially the ladies who served us with very tasty soup, sausages and mulled wine.

Over the last few years we have matched the contribution made by the Parish Council.

John Whyte

THE ROYAL OAK ASTON ABBOTTS

17th Century Thatched Inn



COME AND TRY THE NEW MENU

STARTERS

- Salt & Petter chilli squid & dressed leaves
- Smoked Haddock & spring onion fishcakes & homemade tartare sauce
- Goats cheese & caramelised onion tart
- Feta & Olive salad
- Field mushroom stuffed with goats cheese on garlic toast
- Homemade soup of the day with crusty bread

MAINS

- Ribeye steak garni
- 1kg Moules mariniere on wholegrain mustard mash with pancetta & onion gravy
- Oven roasted lamb rump served with dauphinoise potatoes, mint jus
- Tagliatelle with olives, sun dried tomatoes, pesto & mozzarella served with garlic ciabatta
- Pan roasted Gressingham duck breast, braised red cabbage & apple, garlic saute potatoes & cider jus
- Beer battered cod, hand cut chips & minted mushy peas served with homemade tartare sauce

PHONE : 01296 681 262

What's on in December

Tues 2nd	Aylesbury Vale Transport Meeting Bus/Train queries to Colin	Methodist Church Aylesbury	2pm
Thurs 4th	Coffee Shop Bingo (note change of date)	Village Hall Village Hall	10-12 noon 7.30 pm
Sun 7th	Rambling Club Evensong	Caldecote Lake MK St James	2pm 6pm
Thurs 11th	Coffee Shop	Village Hall	10-12 noon
Sat 13th	Family Christmas Activity	Village Hall	10-12 noon
Sun 14th	Christingle Service	St James	4 pm
Thurs 18th	No Coffee shop but lunch at Cock Wing Whist Drive	Royal Oak	7.30pm
Fri 19th	Carol Singing Bring a torch or lantern	Village Green	7pm
Sunday 21st	Village footpath walk	Village Green	2pm
Mon 22nd	Carol Service	St James	6pm
Tues 23rd	Mobile library	The Green	10.30am
Thurs 25th	Family Communion	St James	10.30 am
Fri 26th	Boxing Day		
Thurs 1st	New Years Day		

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Countryside matters- not quite

I make no apologies this month diverting from my monthly ramblings and rants on countryside matters and agricultural topics to something much more poignant. This is a personal story and more apt for the time of the year and the beginning of the Great War (100 years ago last week), in which so many young men from Wingrave and surrounding areas gave their lives for us and others.

The following was researched from the Commonwealth and war graves commission:

William Alexander Henderson was born in Edinburgh on 20th December 1876, after finishing at Oriel College Oxford, he entered the First Battalion Argyll and Southerland Highlanders in February 1900 and served in South Africa in the Boer war. He saw action in the Transvaal, East and West Pretoria from July to November 1900 and further involvement at Zilikat's Nek and Cape Colony. He received the Queens medal and later the Kings medal. He was a Station staff officer from July 1901.

Captain Henderson was adjutant of the Fifth Seaforth Highlanders from 1910-13 and he returned to the Second battalion of his regiment, in August 1914 he was posted to the Western front at the beginning of hostilities. Early in the morning of the 10th November 1914 he was reported wounded and missing after a night attack on a German trench position at Ploegsteert Wood near Armentieres. He was commanding officer; those that survived described the action of his men as "very gallant". Over one hundred and thirty of his men including himself were reported killed or wounded or missing. 45 days later on the 26th December, Christmas Day 1914, during the unofficial armistice, his body together with only 15 of his men were found in no mans land by the British, they were identified only by the names in their trench coats. The identity discs and other articles were taken by the Germans. He was 37 years old. My father was born in 1912 and of course never knew his father properly.

On the 4th August 1914 the Buckinghamshire Yeomanry B Squadron Aylesbury, was mobilised upon the outbreak of World War I. This was another band of men born and bred locally; they all marched off to the unspeakable horrors of the mud, rats and squalor of those frontline trenches in Northern France. How dammed lucky we all are to have missed that one. Now every 10th November shall always be personally special for us in future years.

James



THE ROYAL OAK ASTON ABBOTTS

17th Century Thatched Inn



COME AND TRY THE NEW MENU

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PHONE : 01296 681 262

ALLOTMENT DIARY

Well, this month I bring you good news and bad news.

The good news is that the Environment Secretary, Liz Truss, has launched a government national strategy, which includes advice that gardeners should mow their lawns less often! (You may perhaps like to cut this article out and sellotape it to your lawnmower, so that you remember the advice next spring). The reason for this campaign is to try to protect over 1,500 species of pollinating insects - including honey bees, bumble bees, moths, butterflies, beetle and hoverflies – by leaving daisies, buttercups, dandelions, clover and other wild flowers in bloom for these to feed on. In an experiment at a Thames Water treatment works, a bee-friendly mix of grasses and flowers was planted, and the frequency of mowing reduced; and there was a 37% increase in the number of bumble bees there.

In addition, the charity “Buglife” recommends only cutting lawns only once in the late summer, so as to restrict CO2 emissions; and the “Beesneeds” website advises against cutting lawns after September, in order to protect bees and caterpillars nesting there. Advice I am happy to take on board!

However, the bad news is that an Australian research team working in Britain has discovered that some of our most common weeds have become hardier, larger and more invasive! This will not come as any great surprise to most gardeners, but it is depressing to have our suspicions confirmed. The team studied three weeds in particular: Oxford ragwort, winter speedwell and willowherb. All three plants are aliens.

Oxford ragwort was originally brought to Britain from Sicily, and first recorded in the wild in 1794. It is now prolific, having taken advantage of the introduction of railways to spread by growing alongside railway lines across the country. It has increased its height and leaf area by about a fifth since its first appearance here in the wild. Winter speedwell originated in Eurasia, and it was first recorded here in the wild in 1826, since when its height has grown by 14%.

Willowherb was first discovered here in 1891, and is a native of the Americas. (Interestingly, I saw some growing in the pan-handle of Alaska last year, and was surprised to find the plant there: I did not realise that it was more remarkable to find it growing in Britain). This perennial plant which is prolific alongside streams and ditches, and seems to enjoy colonising abandoned factories, derelict buildings and the like, has shown the most startling ability to evolve to adapt to its new environment. Since first discovered here in the wild, its leaf size has increased by 50%.

The study concluded that the capacity of plants to keep changing had major implications: it meant that such plants could become even better invaders; and also that they could adapt to climate change because they were ecologically flexible.

Another piece of good news – although one which is not much use to the average gardener – is that a farmer in Avebury in Wiltshire is using satellites to identify where slugs are on his farm, so that he can kill them. Once a week, an orbiting camera passes over his farm and takes a high resolution photograph. This is transmitted to his iPad, and he can see from this if there is an area of his crops which is thinner than it should be – which suggests that slugs are noshing away at the crop. He then programmes the information into his tractor with a pesticide sprayer, which heads off to the relevant part of the field, and blasts it with insecticide. This is clearly quicker and more cost-efficient than trying to treat the whole of the field. He is confident that the saving in pesticide, and the increased yields through eradicating slug damage will more than cover the £4.50 fee per hectare for getting the satellite pictures.

As you will have guessed from the ramblings above, nothing much is happening on my allotment, nor, as far as I am aware, most of the other allotments. The crops are now, in the main, safely gathered in, and the weeds are gradually taking over. I now only have a few rows of leeks which I will harvest during the winter; and I have one row of potatoes still to dig up. (I should have done it already, but I already have plenty of potatoes to eat, and the remaining plants should be safe in the ground for another week or so).

Peter Shorrock

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I happen to be working on a small fencing job this week – small by a contractor’s standards, but big enough for me, and my thoughts have been reflecting on the changes to fencing posts.

In 1973 when I was asked to take over managing the Abbey Farms, here in Aston Abbotts, nothing but best quality oak posts were used and supplied by Linnell Brothers at Silverstone – a very reliable and fairly local saw-mill. There were still many fences here that dated from before the war and, believe it or not, there are still some gate posts that have lasted to this day such was the quality of the oak. Oak did not need to be treated with any preservative – it just got harder and harder and the very best became virtually indestructible. Oak became scarcer and more expensive and techniques for impregnating soft woods like fir with preservatives were developed. The fences and gate posts erected from about 1980 – 1990 were well treated and some were guaranteed for 25 years.

Unfortunately people began to worry about the chemicals used in preserving wood and it was decided to ban some of the products commonly used to preserve fence posts. This has left the strange situation whereby gate posts put in 20 odd years ago are still fine but those put in 15 years ago are probably rotted off just below ground level. Ordinary round fencing stakes which used to be guaranteed for 20 years are now breaking off even after only 4 or 5 years in the ground – have a look at the fence along Lines Hill if you have any doubts.

So, the powers that be brought in a banning a chemical preservative so that we are “Greener” but we now have to replace the posts after only a few years and therefore cut down twice as many trees!

A farmer friend has grown a crop of maize which was to be used in a digester to produce gas for fuel. A huge tractor and forage harvester was needed to cut the crop and 10, yes 10 huge tractors and trailers were needed to transport the maize to the digester. 10 huge tractors all burning diesel and speeding along damaging g the Oxfordshire roads – was it worth it?

20th November and we still have Nasturtiums flowering and looking well in our garden and all our grass is still growing. A friend tells me that her horses are grazing this new grass which is so full of sugars that the horses are hyper-active as if it were spring. Certainly worms are very active at present and so therefore are our friends the moles. We all love moles unless we actually have one in our own lawn or garden.

Last week I was walking over a field of young wheat that had received a dressing of compost – plough in before the crop was sown - compost from a municipal “Composter” and “free” to the farmer as long he paid the transport costs. The field was littered with small bits of plastic and in particular – white plastic spoons, which were in the compost. Also, most interesting, fungi grew all over the field – pale purple mushrooms. Perhaps the compost should be used for mushroom cultivation.

I’m interested that very few winter visiting birds have been seen as yet. No flocks of Redwings or Fieldfares to feed on the hawthorn berries that the sheep can’t reach. And I still can’t buy bare rooted trees as replacements for the orchard – they are still not dormant enough for lifting and selling – what a strange season

This month’s star prize: a native field maple tree which is still in full leaf but golden yellow - it never looked better or, perhaps a wild violet flowering in our wild garden – it obviously thinks that spring has come. If that weather in the U.S.A. reaches us the violet is in for a nasty shock, as are we.

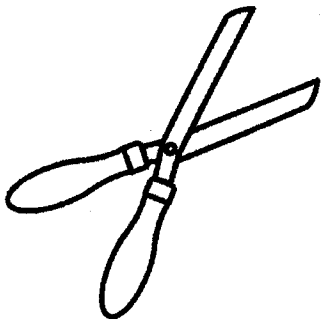
Peter

ASTON ABBOTTS PARISH COUNCIL

These are some concerns recently voiced to the Parish Council by residents



Not everybody has the luxury of off-street parking, but please be considerate to others if you need to park on the road. Parking close to corners and bends creates a safety hazard, parking on the pavement forces pedestrians into the road, and parking on grass verges damages them.



If you have a hedge or tree that encroaches upon the footpath it creates a safety hazard as people have to walk in the road. This can be dangerous, especially along the main village roads. This hazard is particularly difficult for mothers with push-chairs and the elderly. Please keep hedges by footpaths well trimmed.



The majority of dog-owners pick up their dog's poo, but a few leave it for someone else to pick up. This is not fair. If your dog messes on the verge or pavement outside of a house, or outside of the Church or the Village Hall—*please* pick it up.



Cars speeding through the village upset many parishioners. Representations have been made to the police, who have agreed to carry out random checks in Aston Abbots. Police tell us that checks in other villages have shown that a significant number of the offenders are often local residents themselves!

THANK YOU

What follows is a statement of public contrition, as it was intended for broadcast to millions via a national radio station (Radio5) I'm sure Simon won't mind me sharing it with you, anyway Mike has bribed me with beer. Ed

Good morning Danny and Lynsey

Last week you kindly let me talk to you about the Aston Abbotts Heaviest Pumpkin competition which we won.

I say 'we' because I have a very good friend who was an integral part of the success story. Unfortunately I forgot to mention his name on your show and consequently have, quite rightly, been subject to opprobrium for the whole of this week. (I may have mentioned it occasionally Ed)

I tried to suggest that this was because of the fact the he comes from the next village - Cublington - and in the game of 'Village Poker' we always win e.g. We'll see your 'Ian Gillan used to live in Cublington' with 'Toby the keyboard player from Jamiroquai lived in Aston Abbotts' and raise you with ' Sir James Clark Ross, Arctic explorer and discoverer of the magnetic north pole lived in Aston Abbotts and is buried in our churchyard'

So I'd be very grateful if you would, on my behalf, apologise profusely to Michael Bush (from Cublington) who shares the glory equally in winning the Heaviest pumpkin of Aston Abbotts 2014.

Many thanks

Simon Guy
(From Aston Abbotts - a far better village!)

Child care wanted for one early morning each week.

Please contact Dan on 01296 689126 or dan.clarke1888@gmail.com



*Holy Cow!!
home*

The Jewellery Lady

Dear Astonians,

'Holy Cow!! Home' are physical now! As well as being online, we have moved into rear of The Jewellery Lady shop.

The shop has quirky handmade gifts and scents for your home and all occasion jewellery, handbags and scarves for you.

We'll apply a 10% discount on all purchases until the end of June 2014. Just mention that you've seen our advert.

To have a mooch around, come and visit us at:

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HP20 1RS**

Website: www.holycowhome.co.uk

 www.facebook.com/holycowhome

The Astonians

Part 4

Abbotts Arms in Trouble

Astonpete

Contains some strong language

All characters are fictional and hold no association to anyone

Sitting at the bar last night bored, playing with the dried nuts machine strategically situated so you couldn't see the till display. Bert Cartright was standing in for the Landlord whilst he was at the Parish Council Meeting defending his pub following two strangers carrying out lewd acts in the pub garden last Bank holiday. The only other people in were a group of local women from the Aston Abbots 'Aunt Sally' team slagging off their husbands.

I looked up to see Mincy Bumgardner, the slut from up the road, seductively approach the bar. Alluringly, she gestured Bert Cartright who approached her immediately. I watched with wide eyes as she signalled that he should bring his face closer to hers. She gently caressed his naturally grey and ginger highlighted beard. Mincy asked, "Are you the manager?" as she softly stroked his face with both hands. Smiling in a guilty way, Bert replied, "Actually no." "Can you get him for me? I need to speak to him," she said, running her hands beyond his beard and into his hair.

"I'm afraid I can't," breathed Bert with a wheeze. "Is there anything I can do?"

"Yes", Mincy said, "I need you to give him a message", running her forefinger across Bert's lips and slyly popping a couple of her fingers into his mouth and allowing him to suck them gently. Gobsmacked, I thought if Mrs Cartright walks in now Bert's dead!

"What should I tell him?" Bert managed to say. "Tell him," she whispered, "There's no toilet paper, hand soap, or paper towels in the ladies toilet"!

Make sure you book in your festive celebration early... and be rewarded too!



Our new Festive Menu is now available on the website and bookings are now being taken by the Unicorn team. Make sure you book in early to avoid any disappointment. Remember we also have a private dining room for hire for up to 30 diners, so why not hold your company celebration at the award winning Unicorn?

This October

Friday 10th – Three Bar Fire
 Tuesday 14th – Folk Music
 Friday 31st – Dinner & Jazz

in December...

1st Festive Menu starts - see website for details

Tuesday 9th – Folk Music
 Wednesday 10th – *Stee Gin Competition*
 Saturday 13th Live music with 3 Bar Fire
 Friday 19th – The Spokes Christmas Special
Book your tables now!

Got yours yet?

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 The Unicorn Quiz 8pm - 10pm
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Booking always advisable!

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 Visit web site for full event details www.theunicornpub.co.uk

Lynda "The OXO Mum"

Lynda Bellingham was "A Woman for all Season's". Given the wonderful gift to be able to hold you close to her. Drawn to you and would embrace you in that lovely husky voice, always asking how the family were, as she did.

I went back stage after watching her hilarious performance in 'Calendar Girls' the role was, so Lynda.

The Bellingham's lived at Longmoor. Father Donald, Ruth the home-maker, Lynda the actress, Barbara a distinguished photographer, lovely looking girl and very feisty, Jean a nurse a composed, quiet and thoughtful girl. I imagine they lived their youth "Nothing Ventured - Nothing Gained", a legacy from their parents.

Lynda was born to be an actress, I remember her aged 12 - 13 years and through the years learning the finer points to make a career on the stage.

Christmas Eve supper at Longmoor were legendary, the memory still lingers on. Almost Dickensian, log fires, seasonal fayre, silver candlelight and hospitality abounding. Lynda would make an "entrance" and relate the "ever so" near the mark" jokes and stories, which some found hysterical whilst others sat speechless and "Po faced"!!

She used to radiate a loving sincere beaming smile on all she met, no acting there but a genuine interest about you and yours.

Remembering Lynda for being 22ct gold woman, with love and so many cherished memories.

Our thoughts will be for her and the joy of Christmas, it all stems from the Holly and Ivy at Longmoor.

The following poem written by a young soldier, killed in Northern Ireland. Stephen Cummins - dedicated "to all my loved ones".

Valerie Osborn

Do not stand at my grave and weep;

I am not there.

I do not sleep.

I am a thousand winds that blow.

I am the diamond glints on snow.

I am the sunlight on ripened grain.

I am the gentle autumn's rain.

When you awaken in the morning's hush,

I am the swift uplifting rush

Of quiet birds in circled flight.

I am the soft stars that shine at night.

Do not stand at my grave and cry;

I am not there.

I did not die.

Letters Page

Dear Ed

Firstly I would like, on behalf of myself and Richard Clarke, to say thank you to all those in Aston Abbots who took the time to express their appreciation of the 'Lads of Aston Abbots' booklet that was distributed in August (many thanks to Richard who generously organised the printing and delivery)

My latest project is a history of the Royal Oak Inn. I know it's an establishment I rarely frequent but I am fascinated by how far I can go back to discover its past and at the same time some of the social history of the village

If anyone has information regarding this subject then I'd be very grateful if you would share it. I would also like to record the oral history of the present customers (some of whom can go back 50 years in their patronage) Any stories you may have would be gratefully received (I reserve the right to change names in order to protect the innocent - and to save the Chronicle from a costly legal battle!)

In my research to date I have gone back to the Landlords and Landladies of 1753 and can now list all of the people who have looked after our remaining Public House to the present day.

I have also discovered that there was once 3 pubs in Aston Abbots. Back in 1755 there was a hostelry called the 'Rose & Crown', could this have been on the site where 'Rose Cottage' now stands?

I have also come across some fascinating documentary evidence of what life was like back in the 17th Century. The following is an extract (produced verbatim) from the baptism records of St James the Great in 1665:

"Rebekah daugh. of John and Mary Emity, vagrants , bap 7 Feb 1665. Shee was born in the church porch Feb 3."

Things were obviously very tough back then but good to see the church looking after it's lost sheep.

And finally a mystery! (perhaps another project in the future). This is an extract from the church burial records of 1568:

"Anne dau of William Vincher bur 30 September.
William, that was slayne att the Wyndmill, bur 6 November."

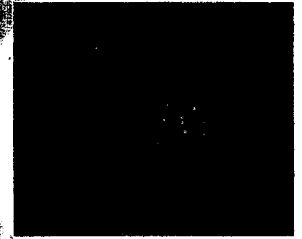
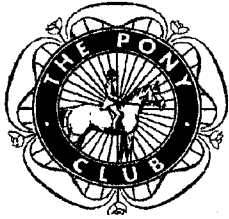
Who was William Vyncher and who slew him? Where was the "Windmill"

(He had been married for only 3 years to Margrett Chalener on 23 Jun 1565 in St James)

"the game's afoot!" (but only after I've finished with the Royal Oak.)

Regards

Simon



Sam Darvill Equestrian is excited to announce...

Dairy Cottage Riding Academy Christmas Open Day

Sunday 21 December 10.30am to 3.00pm

Meet Santa

Pony Rides

Coffee and Cakes

Displays and Demo's

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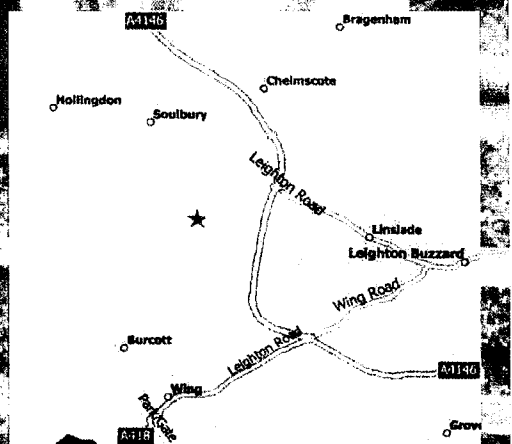
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£35 Adult Private

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Buzzard, BEDS
07970126906



From the A4146 Bypass, 1000
towards Soulbury, after the
s-bend, take your first left



Aston Abbots Bus Pass Beer Tour – Inaugural event

I did wonder if this should go in the travel section or be retitled “Last of the summer wines comes to AA”..Ed

Friday the 14th November. 14.01 hours. The 165 bus approaches the Bull and Butcher stop. Six men emerge from the shadows. It has started. The Aston Abbots Bus Pass Beer Tour of Aylesbury is underway.

Upstairs on the bus and we all sat near the front. It was like the kids going to school. For several of us it was the first time on a bus for many years and upstairs you see so much. You also duck quite a lot as various branches seem certain to hit the bus. But this driver knows the ropes. Off we go to Aylesbury. Lots of Oohs and Ahhs as we get past Rowsham and we all see lots of trees being planted in a field on the left. You don't see that in a car we all say.

Anyway first stop in Aylesbury is the Farmers Bar in the old Kings Head Hotel, owned by the National Trust. Good for the culture vultures. An excellent welcome from the staff behind the bar and a very good choice of local beers. They offer us a pitcher of beer. We thought we were getting one each but apparently we had to share.

Next stop The Bell Hotel, Market Square where we take advantage of the Friday offer; Fish, chips, peas and a beer for around £6. The Ruddles beer gets a top vote on the first round and pips the Doombar, which we all opt for on the second round.

The highlight of the trip so far was when one of our party, who shall be nameless (Neil Chesher) failed to get his fish and chips but has an enormous steak and chips put in front of him. By the time he had finished telling us how much he was going to enjoy this food, much better than the fish etc, the serving staff realised their mistake and came and took it away. His fish turned up a couple of minutes later.

One disappointing pub later where we were the only customers led us to try the Temple St Wine bar, newly opened in the old Aylesbury Literary Society building, a little earlier than planned. Very nice place and a couple of bottles of a nice Tempranillo wine finished the afternoon off in a very pleasant fashion.

The return journey was planned to be by bus but later in the day they get a bit of a rare species so a taxi was quickly called to take us all home.

Something a bit different and it seemed to go well. Several people have expressed a keen interest in joining in this event if we do it again. I am certainly up for that so sometime in the spring I suggest we do it again.

Winslow has been mentioned as a place to visit but open to suggestions if anyone has other ideas. Finally a bus pass is not compulsory but wanting to have a good time is. Hopefully see everybody who attended this one at the next and as many others as we can muster.

John Whyte

Talking of AA I trust these elderly gentlemen are keeping count of their alcohol unit intake, Ed

December
2014

The Aston Abbotts Email Database

In last month's Chronicle a correspondent asked what had happened to the Aston Abbotts email database. This database was originally proposed by Steve Markwell and some of you may have given your email address to him at the Aston Abbotts fete.

A little time has passed since then, but I am pleased to tell you that this system is now close to being launched. Steve has enlisted the assistance of Stuart Burgess and myself, and we have now discussed and resolved a number of issues regarding hosting, costs, privacy, *et cetera*.

The database will work like the Wingrave postmaster system, whereby villagers can request notices to be sent out to the database members to inform them about village activities. The Parish Council might post notices and you should be informed about village activities. We may also allow occasional, relevant, postings from people outside the village if they make a small contribution to the Chronicle funds.



We anticipate launching the system soon after Christmas. Before then, or around that time, you may be approached by somebody you know asking if you want to join our post-box system. This is because we wish to make sure that the system is as widely used as possible.

It is anticipated that you will only receive a few emails a month via this postmaster system. Please be assured that your email address will remain private and will not be passed on to third parties, nor will it be revealed to other users of the postmaster system unless you wish it to be revealed. All notices posted by this system will be approved, to make sure that they are relevant and to ensure that you do not receive any spam.

If you wish to be added to the email database then please send an email with your name to:

phil@aston-abbotts.co.uk

You can also use that address if you have any questions.

You will not be added to the email post-box system without specifically requesting us to do so, and you will have the option of switching it off at any time.

The Wingrave system has been operating for some time and it has been found to be very useful. We hope that our system will be equally useful and I would encourage you to join in. There is no risk and you can leave the system at any time.

Phil Spooner

Village Hall – Progress Report

I am pleased to advise AVDC have granted planning consent for the proposed extension of our Village Hall. The conditions attached to the permission are as follows:-

The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission (10th November 2014)

The materials to be used for the external surfaces, including walls, (mortar and brick bond), roofs and windows shall be the same colour, type and texture as those used in the existing building, unless the Local Planning Authority otherwise first agree in writing.

The Trustees have now asked our consultant to prepare drawings and documents to obtain Building Regulation Approval. After which a more precise estimate of the costs can be advised.

The Trustees are holding a public meeting and exhibition in the Village Hall on Sunday 11th January at 2.30pm when we can discuss how best the monies needed can be raised and to hear your views.

John Hardcastle

VILLAGE HALL PUBLIC MEETING

*To discuss the proposed improvements
to our Village Hall*

**All villagers are cordially invited
to attend a public meeting in the Village Hall on**

Sunday 11th January at 2.30pm

Please put this date in your diary

**The design drawings will be on view.
Please come along and let the Trustees
have your comments and opinions.**

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Book Club

Empty Cradles by Margaret Humphries

This is a true story of a social worker from Nottingham, Margaret Humphries who uncovers an unbelievable story of a child being shipped from the UK to Australia for a better life. She soon discovers that this is not an isolated incident with over 100,000 children being shipped to Australia as late as 1970.

The idea was that they would go to a better life (many were orphans) but sadly, as the story tells, many were abused or put to work under terrible conditions.

What makes the story of Empty Cradles worse, is that these children and their families were lied to - children were told that their parents had died or worse, they were sent with no explanation, many thinking they had done something wrong.

Margaret the social worker, sets about bringing the powers that be to account (a very difficult task as each authority blames the other - the Catholic Church and the respective governments) She also tries to reunite families. This book generated a lot of discussion and was found to be an easy read, informative but not necessarily enjoyable!

Francesca

ASTON ABBOTTS THEATREGOERS

The Waterside Theatre has continued to make available tickets to see shows and events. Since the end of April this year the following villagers took advantage of this kind offer:-

Sally Turnham, Bob Carvey, Sondra Dickason, Carol Bates, Pete Lucas, Judy Hardcastle, Kate Newsham, Sue Wheatley, Sally Palmer, Gavin Winston, David Gray, June Cox, Carolyn Guse.

If you would like to enter the draw for a free pair of tickets then look out for the next batch of shows that hopefully will appear in the Chronicle in the New Year.

John Hardcastle

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Aloha from Hawaii at Aylesbury's Waterside Theatre on Saturday 15th November

On 14th January 1973 Elvis performed his legendary 'Aloha from Hawaii' concert at the Honolulu International Centre. Broadcast live via satellite to over 40 countries around the world it reputedly reached an audience of over a billion people!

In 2005 'Gordon Hendricks as Elvis' won the talent show 'Stars in their Eyes' and thereby started a very successful singing career. Looking for a platform for his talents he hit on the idea of recreating the 'Aloha from Hawaii' show and taking it on tour in the UK. The venues in 2014 included Birmingham, Manchester, York, Truro and Aylesbury.

You don't have to be middle aged to enjoy this sort of entertainment, but it helps.

The opening number was by his backing singers 'Sweet Inspirations' complete with Afro hairstyles and synchronised steps. The 12 piece band included 3 electric and one acoustic guitar, trumpeters, sax and trombone, two percussionists and two keyboard players. The whole place rocked.

Then it was time for the grand entrance and he did not disappoint. In iconic tight white suit, flares and glitter he looked, moved and sang like Elvis. His thick black hair, complete with quiff and sideburns, high collar and studded belt accentuating those swivel hips, accurately recreated the image.

He rapidly established a rapport with the audience and ladies of a certain age rushed to the stage to offer roses and garlands in exchange for a kiss. Many noticeably swooned. Even his wicked and infectious laugh was authentic. The, presumably reinforced, gussets of his trousers were severely tested by his on-stage manoeuvres.

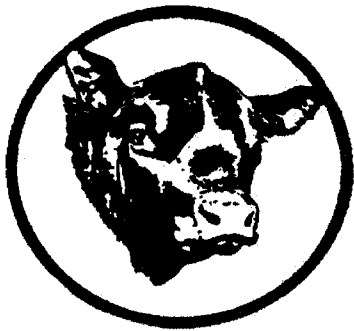
The songs came thick and fast. Proud Mary, Hound Dog, Blue Suede Shoes, Teddy Bear, Fools Rush In, Fever, Johnny B. Goode, An American Trilogy, C. C. Rider, Suspicious Minds, Blue Hawaii, My Way and many more. They were jiving in the aisles and more precariously in the balconies; the theatre floor reverberated to the tapping toes and, particularly after an interval spent at the bar, the less inhibited ladies stood and swayed, to the music, arms in the air.

The finale received a standing ovation that lasted many minutes. He sang an encore and eventually left the stage. The concert was finally brought to a close with the customary announcement 'Ladies and Gentlemen, Elvis has left the building'. Pam and I thoroughly enjoyed the evening and extend our grateful thanks to John for the tickets.

David Gray



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Food

Dish of the month

An (ir)regular column on this month's choice of haute cuisine in our area

November 2014 - The Fish & Chip van

Wednesday evening came around and the cupboard/fridge/freezer was bare(ish). To start cooking now would mean not eating 'till midnight so the thought of a 'chippy tea' grew in its appeal.

Back on with the coat and wellies and 3 minutes later I'm waiting on the village green eagerly anticipating the distant sound of a van's bell and the sight of the blue and white chip van making its way from Weedon. Luckily I'm not the only person waiting for the epicurean delights of the soil and the sea otherwise the sight of a middle age man loitering beneath a solitary street light might have aroused some suspicion.

The chip van chose that evening to be very busy and consequently we didn't hear the Pavlov like bell until well after nine but this gave us a chance to catch up on the latest news from the various corners of Aston Abbots.

Much to the chagrin of my fellow diners I suddenly developed an unknown turn of foot as the van slowed down and found myself at the front of the queue. "Fish, chips and mushy peas please" I ordered, then realised that they hadn't slid open the glass yet so had to repeat my order once pleasantries were exchanged with the driver and the cook.

Howe & Co. have been serving up some of the finest fish and chips for over 80 years. They visit 90 towns and villages surrounding Little Horwood (where they are based), covering a radius of about 30 miles and stopping in hundreds of locations.

There are now 4 vans in their fleet and the rounds operate both lunch and dinner Monday to Saturday every week. For us in Aston Abbots it's Van No.2 which serves us having started the round at 17:15 in Swanbourne. It's timed to arrive at 20:45 and we're not the last on the route as the last stop is Cheddington at 21:50.

It was with great anticipation that I hurried home clutching my large portion in a warm paper parcel. Straight into the kitchen and onto the hot plate ("By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail." — Benjamin Franklin) Knife, fork, tray, salt, pepper, tomato sauce and we're ready.

I have to say I was not disappointed in the slightest. How they manage to serve the fish with crispy batter and yet not overcooked is beyond me. The chips were fried perfectly, not soggy in the slightest, and did not taste of the oil they were cooked in (other local chippies take note!) and for southerners the mushy peas weren't bad either – just the right side of mushy in my opinion. There was plenty to eat (no stinting on the chips) and I just about managed to clean the plate. (As a hard worker I do develop a large appetite as you can imagine).

Overall a lovely, once every now and then, treat and at £5.90 very good value. Even better was the fact that the plate and cutlery went straight into the dishwasher – no washing up!

Howe & Co also do event catering with Aston Abbots within their normal coverage range. For further details check out their website: <http://www.howeandcofishandchips.co.uk/index.php>

Looking through all the villages that they serve I noticed that they didn't visit our neighbour Cublington. Can't think why – they're missing a great treat.

Look out for more reviews in subsequent issues. Next time it's – "L'Ortolan for a birthday lunch"

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Travel...well they were moving

London to Milton Keynes bike ride

On the 5th October after much planning and discussion three members of the Aston Abbots Cycling Gang set off for London. Departing at 7am with “dreaming of being a Formula 1 driver” Brigitte Guitterez at the wheel, off we went down the M1, with the bikes safely stored in the back of the van.

A quick safety check and at 8.10am we were on our way. Boy was it cold. We had plenty of clothing with us but it was clear that the sun would come out later so we very much had that in mind, but for the first 60 minutes we definitely wondered if we had made the right decision.

There was no mass start. You set off when you were ready so lots of people were already on their way with many more to come. Not sure how many took part overall but it was several thousand.

It was a really pleasant route and it was surprising how quickly we left the London main roads behind and settled into some quieter lanes.

Three of us took part, Juan Guitterez, Dave Lewis and me. We established a good pace, relative to the fact that we were told the route was 55 miles in total. Lots of other cyclists around and many signposts put up by the British Heart Foundation who were sponsoring the event.

In no time at (or so it seemed) we were near St Albans, so over 20 miles completed. We were told the major climb was up to the Dunstable Downs and having got that out of the way, we were feeling quite pleased with ourselves. However no one had told us about the climb from Houghton Regis into Toddington. That was hard. As we went up, very slowly, we heard a guy who had passed us turn to his friend and say that he could see he was struggling so he was happy to stop and walk up with him. Wimp. We made it up the hill, just, and then it was the final 15 miles into Milton Keynes.

On the outskirts of Milton Keynes we were directed on to the cycling paths that are everywhere. So much safer.

After a 4 hour 10 minute run we completed our ride, which we all measured at 58 miles rather than 55.

We also raise £415 for the British Heart Foundation, which with gift aid should get close to £500. Some through the “Just Giving” site and some through various villagers who we grabbed in the Royal Oak one Saturday night. Many thanks to those who sponsored us, all monies have been passed to the charity.

So the big question, would we do it again, well maybe but the London to Brighton run next June looks like a definite. If anybody else wants to join us you would be most welcome.

Thanks again to the sponsors

John Whyte

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BRAVO 22 COMPANY LEGACY PROJECT

Aylesbury Waterside Theatre in collaboration with **Bravo 22 Company** and the **Royal British Legion** are writing a brand new play based on true-life stories and you can get involved!

From performing or taking a backstage role in sound, lighting, wardrobe, stage management, press or marketing, this unique project will be under the professional guidance of a world-class team. The project follows the success of *The Two Worlds of Charlie F* which played at the Waterside Theatre in March 2014 and was created out of the first **Bravo 22 Company** project.

The project focuses on using the process of theatre to support the recovery of wounded, injured and sick service personnel and support their transition and integration along with veterans, reservists, their families and the rest of the Armed Forces Community into Buckinghamshire society.

The groundbreaking true-to-life production will reflect the thoughts and experiences of recovering ex-military personnel and their families. The Legacy Project strives to assist the personal development of all involved, whilst sharing the reality of the impact of war upon servicemen and their relations.

If you are over 18, a member of the Armed Forces Community and have been affected either directly or indirectly by recovery, transition and integration into civilian life then you could be part of something extraordinary.

To register your interest or find out more please email bravo22company@britishlegion.org.uk or call the **Royal British Legion Contact Centre 0808 802 8080**. You can also visit <http://www.atgtickets.com/venues/aylesbury-waterside-theatre/creative-learning/>

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A trip to Russia part 2

Our cruise took us along the Moscow canal, the river Volga and the Volga-Baltic canal, through 18 massive locks and across several large inland lakes and reservoirs. The banks of the river are generally heavily forested, with small settlements. The stirring work 'Finlandia' from the Karelia Suite by Sibelius will give you a flavour. The cruise took six days and each day we made a stop and an onshore visit. Our first stop was at **Uglich**, a small town that produces clocks and watches. Since the battery in Sally's expensive watch had expired on the flight over, we decided to invest in a new watch. After a day it stopped working as well. That was when we discovered that didn't have a battery but needed to be wound up!! Remember those?

The following day we visited **Yaroslavl**, a large city. Our tour included a concert from a small group of male singers. We also watched a bell ringer playing a set of 10 bells, each of which was attached by wire to a different finger. I don't recall our intrepid ringers at St James managing more than one bell each, let alone a peel and a half. At Goritsky we visited a vast remote monastery founded in 1397 but now largely a museum. The following day, we reached **Kizhi Island** which is a UNESCO world heritage site, now an outdoor museum where many 18th century Russian wooden buildings have been rebuilt. The most spectacular of these was the magnificent Transfiguration Cathedral, built without nails, and boasting no less than 22 onion-domed cupolas of aspen, glowing in the mid afternoon sunlight. Demonstrations of local crafts are given by locals wearing period costumes and there was another bell-ringer to serenade us.

The cruise was very much educational. There were a couple of films narrated by American and British experts that took us in some detail through Russian history since Peter the Great. A Moscow University professor was also on board and gave four talks on Russian history, the Soviet era and the Russian character. A former diplomat's wife, she also acts as one of Vladimir Putin's interpreters. It soon became clear that the Russian views on the unrest in Ukraine and the annexation of the Crimea were somewhat different from those portrayed in the Western press. 900,000 refugees have been absorbed and dispersed throughout Russia and all have jobs!! We are a peace loving nation but don't provoke us or we will stand up for ourselves. Looking back over Russian history, the most successful times have been when Russia enjoyed a strong leadership, and those leaders fought wars to expand Russian territory against the Finns, the Poles, the Germans, the Swedes, the Turks and the Japanese to name but a few. So why does Russia make it so difficult for foreign tourists to get a visa? Answer: Well it took two months to get my granddaughter a visa to go on a vacation to Torquay.

But there was a fun side as well, a class for painting Russian dolls, cookery classes making blini's and pelmeni (beef and pork dumplings), tours of the bridge, the galley and the engine room. We even had light hearted Russian lessons from our gorgeous cruise director, Yulia. The real challenge here is to learn the Cyrillic alphabet and translate it back to English sounds. Then words can become quite recognisable. Hardly time to even contemplate the film of the day. We took in the last performance of *Doctor Zhivago*, and sometime just after midnight just as it was getting interesting, there was an interval. It never did restart, so we are still waiting to see the second half.

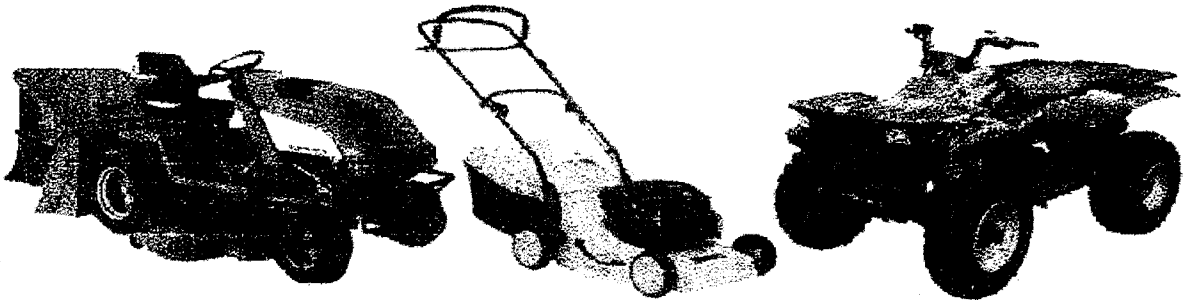
The *Volga Dream* came to rest alongside the River Neva on the outskirts of St Petersburg where we enjoyed a three night stay in a city centre hotel. Built by Peter the Great in 1703, St Petersburg is where the Romanov Tzars ruled for over 200 years. It is one of the great romantic cities and boasts grand palaces, galleries and theatres, including the magnificent **Hermitage** art museum, once the Tsar's winter palace. It would take several years to view all the 3 million exhibits in this museum.

We visited the **Peterhof Palace**, the Russian Versailles, with 176 gravity driven fountains (no pumps) all turned on at 11am in the morning accompanied by stirring Russian patriotic music - quite spectacular. Strolling through the extensive gardens we visited the Tzaritsa Pavilion (a bathing house) and a large shower house built exclusively for the guards. Peter only stayed there for less than one month. Not too far away in Pushkin, is the **Catherine Palace** completed in 1756, a far bigger and yet more spectacular residence originally built for Peter's wife Catherine I but greatly extended by their daughter Empress Elizabeth. The interior features the legendary Amber room with 450kg of panels, but there are many other ostentatious gold leafed rooms that you visit on the tour. Over 100kg of gold was used to decorate the exterior alone. Both palaces were destroyed by the occupying Germans forces in the 1940's and have been extensively and lovingly restored over many years. St Petersburg, at the time known as Leningrad, was under siege from German forces for 900 days. We passed the factory that continued building tanks, which rolled out to the nearby front line.

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It's really not surprising that Russia had a revolution in 1917 - having seen the opulence of the Palaces and sheer volume of possessions of the Romanov Tzars, which were uncaringly flaunted in front of the masses.

The centre of St Petersburg is almost like Venice. Low lying and subject to frequent flooding, it is intersected by many canals. There are frequent tours by boat, a great way to take in and photograph the sites. You can even take in a night time river boat tour in the early hours to see the bridges, all of which open like Tower Bridge in London for several hours each night to allow large cargo ships to pass along the River Neva. It is also difficult to ignore the reminders of history. We visited the museum where Lenin had his office and saw the famous balcony from which he addressed the communist workers and directed the revolution in July 1917. Elsewhere in the museum, you can listen to Putin's speech to the nation on being appointed caretaker president on New Year's Eve 2000 after Boris Yeltsin resigned.

We turned down the opportunity of going to the ballet, knowing that the Kirov was on tour. Those who went described the performance as clumpy. We did take in an evening folk show 'Feel yourself Russian' held in the magnificent 19th century *Nikolayevsky Palace*, collecting glasses of champagne on the way up the flowing staircases and canapés during the interval. Music for the show was provided by a competent band of musicians playing a range of unusual instruments. Dancers were wearing a variety of colourful costumes. The finale, of course, was the Cossack dancing, but we also saw a range of other folk dances, including dances that the ladies used to attract the male of the species. Having failed to attract their usual partners, three ladies sought assistance from three male members of the audience, one of whom hailed from Aston Abbotts. So my theatrical CV now includes dancing at a palace in St Petersburg. I think I got away with it, leaving the stage with red lipstick on my cheek.

So what were my overall impressions of Russia? The impression has always been given that the Communists tried hard to suppress religious beliefs, but we saw many magnificent churches lovingly restored, with crowds of visitors, and not just tourists. Another surprise was not an organ in sight anywhere, all the music being supplied by choirs with incredible voice power and control. A nation that has seen hard times following the breakup of the Soviet empire, but after several years of corruption and attempts to introduce capitalism in a somewhat misguided fashion, is now on the road to becoming a credible force in world order again. There were no overt signs of poverty and the shops were full of goods. They may be trying to make life difficult at the moment for McDonalds but Burger King and KFC were just around the corner. We were able to travel freely around both cities, during free afternoons and evenings. What are the views of the locals? Difficult to tell – one of our guides was very much in favour of the current leadership, the other much less so. Russia does face significant political and financial issues in how it deals with Crimea and Ukraine going forward and perhaps the cards aren't quite stacked in their favour as it might appear from the west.

But as a tourist, would I recommend others to go? Absolutely. This was a wonderful trip to see sights that are quite spectacular and experience a completely different culture. Going the slow route down the river from Moscow to St Petersburg made all the difference.

Nigel Palmer



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NEPAL AND INDIA

It did not start well. We had flown for 9 hours from London to Delhi, where we had to wait for 3 hours for a connecting flight to Kathmandu. That flight took another 2 hours, so that we were fairly knackered by the time we arrived. We then had to queue up for over two hours, firstly to buy a visa to allow us into the country; and then to show it to a different official! I think I can describe my mood at that time as being grumpy!

However, things improved. On our arrival at our hotel we were all presented with a white silk scarf as a way of welcoming us, and then a meal, plus the internal application of some Everest beer, lightened my mood considerably! While we were in Kathmandu we were taken to visit numerous stupas and temples, including the biggest stupa in Nepal, the Boudanath Stupa. (A stupa is a solid dome-shaped structure which is sacred to Buddhists – usually surmounted by a tower which has Buddha's three eyes symbolically painted on it). We also went to Durbar Square, which was where the city's kings were once crowned. (Durbar means "palace"). It is the oldest part of the city, and most of the buildings date from the 17th/18th centuries. In the centre of the square are twenty or so Hindu temples, plus another stupa. On one side is the former royal palace (now a museum) and the old elephant stables. Most of the temples were pagoda-style, and the one thing that stood out was the incredibly intricate wood carving – every door and window must have taken the original craftsmen days to make. They are quite staggering. They are generally produced by members of one particular tribe in Nepal, called the Newari.

While staying in Kathmandu, the whole party went on an early morning plane trip alongside the Himalayas, which gave us views which were breathtaking – including, of course, a view of Everest. Being fairly laid-back, the Nepalese airline with which we flew allowed each of the passengers in turn into the cockpit, so that we had a pilot's eye view of the mountains, which was much appreciated.

We also visited the city of Patan, which is Nepal's second largest city, and is across the river from Kathmandu, and then two small towns nearby, Dhulikel and Bhaktapur. All three had their own Durbar Squares, having originally been independent city-states – each full of temples in different styles. Bhaktapur was especially beautiful, and much of the town had clearly changed little since the middle ages. Again I was staggered by the quality of the Newari wood carving of the doors and windows. The whole town is a Unesco World Heritage Site.

We then stayed at a village called Nagarkot, 30k from Kathmandu, over 7,000 feet above sea level. It has fantastic views of eight of the thirteen Himalayan ranges in Nepal – and each bedroom in the hotel had a terrace with a view of the mountains. We had a walk through the foothills while we were there, during which we saw marijuana being dried, and tried moonshine from an illicit still being operated by a villager.

I had expected to like Nepal before I went, and I did. The majority of the people are clearly dirt-poor by western standards, but they always seemed cheerful and friendly. Much of the city itself resembled a building site, with piles of bricks, stones and rubble everywhere, since they seem to have a habit of starting construction works, and then going away and leaving it. This was particularly true of many of the roads, which were deplorable, with the clearly planned road repairs being continually put off till tomorrow – possibly for financial reasons.

We then travelled by plane to Varanasi in India, which was quite a culture shock. It is the dirtiest, most squalid, crowded, chaotic, colourful, lively and noisy place I have ever visited. It is on the banks

of the Ganges, which is a sacred river for Hindus; and every Hindu when he dies, wants to be cremated there, and have his ashes thrown into the river. (It is believed by them that if you die there, you are liberated from the cycle of life and death, which would otherwise mean that you would have to be re-born – perhaps as an insect, or some equally humble creature, depending on how good a life you had led). All along the river are vast steps leading down to the river, called ghats. Leading to these is a labyrinth of alleys that are too narrow for cars, so that one has to walk. At all times of day the congestion is extraordinary – but especially so in the evening when the locals come down to the ghats for an evening service. It is like walking along Oxford Street on a Saturday before Christmas, but with the addition of bicycles, rickshaws, motor bikes and motor-scooters all weaving their way through the crowd, in both directions – and all the time sounding their horns to persuade pedestrians to move out of the way. Oh yes, and of course the occasional cow, which are allowed to roam free everywhere. The river itself looks totally polluted, but devout Hindus still bathe and swim in it, wash themselves, their clothes and cattle in it, and I suspect drink it.

After Varanasi we moved on to Khajuraho, which is the site of 20 Hindu temples, which were built between 950 & 1050 AD, and are absolutely staggering – particularly when you consider how primitive our civilisation was at that time. All are built of sandstone, and are covered with intricate decoration. Most famously there are a prodigious number of sculptures and tableau, of which a large number show various acts of copulation in different positions. Some of the positions were remarkable – and one could only be achieved with the aid of two beautiful lady assistants! Quite why a holy temple should be covered in such images is a mystery even to experts. Fortunately the temples fell into disuse over the centuries, becoming covered by forest and vegetation, and were forgotten about when Islam was the dominant religion in India; so that they escaped the undoubted destruction that would have been their fate. In 1830 local Hindus guided a British surveyor, T S Burt to the site, and he ensured their restoration.

From there we went to Orcha – to see yet more temples, a fort, many mausoleums, and a number of vultures. Then we were on to the Golden Triangle: Agra, Jaipur and Delhi. Agra is of course famous for the Taj Mahal, and it did not disappoint. The first view you get of it, having walked through the entrance gateway is quite spell-binding. It is like the Grand Canyon, in that before you go you have seen hundreds of photographs of it, but the reality knocks you sideways. It is quite simply the most beautiful building in the world. It is of course totally absurd: it took 22 years to build, and employed over 20,000 workers. It was built by the Mughal king Shah Jahan to the memory of his late (and favourite) wife, Mumtaz Mahal, out of beautiful white marble; but at a time when most of his subjects lived in mud and brick hovels. He spent so much of his kingdom's wealth on it that he was bankrupting the state, so that he was deposed by his son Aurangzeb, and spent the last 8 years of his life in exile in the Red Fort about a mile away across the river, and could only see the Taj Mahal from the windows of his cell.

The Red Fort is also magnificent, and of itself would be sufficient reason to visit Agra. There had been a fort on the site around 1000 AD, but the current fort was built by the Mughal emperor Akbar in 1565, and later converted into a palace, when white marble was much used in addition to the original red sandstone. Amongst other curiosities are the (now dry) moat, which originally had crocodiles in it as an extra defence; a large stone bath about 20 feet across, made out of one piece of stone, used by the royal queens for bathing; and the two-storey labyrinth of underground rooms and passages where Akbar kept his 500-strong harem. In case the fort should ever fall, the garrison would retreat to another fort slightly higher up the hill; and then finally to a third fort on top of the hill.

Jaipur was built in the 18th century as India's first planned city. It is often called the "Pink City", since the buildings in the old town are painted a pink (or to be precise, terra cotta) colour, to imitate the red sandstone used by the Mughal emperors. New buildings in the main street have to be built in the same 18thC style, and painted to match the originals, and the result is very picturesque. Jaipur has its own fort, called the "Amber Fort". Curiously, the name has nothing to do with the attractive yellow sandstone with which it is built, but is named after the goddess, Amba. It is as beautiful and magnificent as the Red Fort. There is a wonderful garden laid out at the end of a man-made peninsula in the middle of the adjoining lake. One way of getting to the fort is to go up on elephant, and there is a constant procession of elephants making the journey up, covered in colourful silks. Again there is a small fort higher than the main fort, which contains a cannon which is the world's largest. It was only used once, as a demonstration, and legend has it that despite only using half the design amount of gunpowder, the cannonball flew for 35k!

On the subject of the world's biggest: the palace museum in the town contains two silver vessels which are the largest in the world: each about 5 feet high, and made by melting down 14,000 silver coins. And there is an observatory in the town created by a Maharaja in the 18thC, who was a fanatical astronomer, which includes what must be the world's largest sundial. The arm which produces the shadow is 27m high. It is at an angle of 27° - the latitude of Jaipur - and measures the time correctly to within 12 seconds.

Finally Delhi. This was another surprise. New Delhi is a city full of wide tree-lined boulevards, with elegant buildings, extensive gardens, and traffic (masses of it) which follows the rules of the road, keeping to its own side; stopping at traffic lights, etc. You could have picked it up and dropped it in a European city, and it would not have looked out of place. Adjoining it, however, was Old Delhi, which more closely resembled the places we had seen previously on our journey. The two main things we saw here were Humayun's Tomb; a mausoleum built in the 16thC, and which is said to have influenced the architect of the Taj Mahal; and India's largest mosque, the Jama Masjid. Before we were allowed in the courtyard of this mosque, we had to remove our shoes, and then in the case of the men wrap a long loincloth around our waists, to cover our bare legs; and in the case of the women put on a garment like a hospital gown!

Before I went to India, I was unsure whether I would like the country, but I came away a total convert. The people there - and not just the hotel staff and guides, who are paid to be nice - were extraordinarily friendly. Travelling in our bus, we frequently found children waving at us from the roadside or other vehicles as we passed, and very often teenagers too. Several times complete strangers asked if we would pose for a photograph with them and their families. It was a nuisance having to watch what one ate and drank, for fear of getting "Delhi belly", but one got used to this I even got used to Indian traffic (although I would not drive there in a million years). Basically you conduct yourself in a car or on a bicycle or motorbike as you would as a pedestrian. You can do anything, provided you do not bump into anyone else. Traffic lights do not exist in the majority of the places we visited, and yet vehicles managed to get across cross-roads perfectly safely. In the 16 days we were in Nepal & India, we only saw one accident, which had happened on the other side of a dual-carriageway, just before we arrived. And, as a result of it a couple of buses and several cars switched to our side of the carriageway so that they would not be delayed - without our driver or any of the motorists on our side of the road turning a hair!

The most extraordinary sight we saw was in Jaipur. Driving through the town, to visit a mausoleum commonly known as the "Baby Taj", we saw a car coming slowly towards us, with two trumpeters walking beside it in vaguely military uniforms, and a small crowd behind. When we passed the car, we discovered there was a small bald-headed man with a pot belly, walking slowly behind it - absolutely starkers! Our guide explained that he was clearly a sadhu, or holy man, and the crowd were his followers - and clearly did not think it out of the ordinary!

If this article has persuaded you to visit Nepal or India, I am sure you will not be disappointed.

Peter Shorrock



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Dear friends,

The Nativity scene which is such a staple of school and Church Christmas events is a relatively modern innovation.

When Francis of Assisi was trying to teach his listeners about God's love for His creation and how we should respect that creation he looked around and lit upon the rural simplicity of the peasants around him in Italy and related it back to the journey of Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem from Nazareth. There in a inn/outhouse/stable/cave Mary gave birth to the long promised Son of God Jesus. Francis realized the strength of this rustic scene to teach people big concepts and so was created the Nativity as we still visualize it. This was in the 13th century so in cosmic terms 'modern'.

Before that date of course people knew the story but it was not given the prominence we have given it of late. Francis had a great love of nature and spoke of planets and stars and animals as his brothers, sisters, and friends and so on. He also knew instinctively that we needed to care for and nurture our home 'mother' earth.

As I write this a capsule has landed on a comet in outer space and we await with baited breath to hear what its equipment will tell us, if anything, of the origins of life. People are divided over the utility and expense of such ventures---the knowledge makes it worthwhile but could not the money and expertise involved be better employed?

A good end of year discussion point over the turkey and pud. Have a great time and don't get indigestion!

God Bless, Philip.

Reverend Philip Derbyshire
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Church Matters

The diary of St. James's



At the Oxford Diocesan Synod on 15th November the guest speaker, Monawar Hussain outlined the Middle East situation as he saw it. He is a representative of Mainstream Islam in the UK and a signatory (one of 126 from 50 countries) to an open letter to ISIS currently conducting a war in Syria and Iraq. Monawar referred to ISIS as narrow literalist interpreters of the Q'Uran, who regard all who do not agree with them as non- Muslims. The letter included a list of interpretations of the Q'Uran including:

1. It is forbidden in Islam to kill the innocent.
2. It is forbidden in Islam to kill emissaries, ambassadors and diplomats (and hence journalists and aid workers).
3. It is forbidden in Islam to harm or mistreat – in any way – Christians or any 'People of the Scripture'.
4. It is forbidden in Islam to force people to convert.
5. It is forbidden in Islam to deny women their rights
6. It is forbidden in Islam to deny children their rights.
7. It is forbidden in Islam to torture people.
8. It is forbidden in Islam to declare a caliphate without consensus from all Muslims.
9. Loyalty to one's nation is permissible in Islam.

Many atrocities have been committed in the name of religion and this abuse still goes on today.

The full text of the letter can be found at www.lettertobaghdadi.com

Remembrance Service

In watery autumn sunshine we congregated at the war memorial just inside the Church gate. It was just before 11am on Remembrance Sunday. Nonogenarian parishioners, proudly displaying their medals; scouts, cubs, beavers and the British Legion with their banners; families of all ages from pensioners to babes in arms, bowed their heads in remembrance of the men and women of the armed forces who have lost their lives in defence of King, Queen, and country over the years.

The list of those from the village who lost their lives in the first and second world wars was read out, a lone trumpeter (Peter Cooper) played the 'Last Post' and wreaths were set at the foot of the memorial. Two minutes silence was brought to an end by Peter's playing of 'Reveille', we recited the Lord's prayer and walked silently in contemplation to the Church for the remainder of the Service.

The British Legion and Scout flags were paraded to the altar past a full congregation seated between windowsills decorated with hundreds of poppies. Reverend Philip Derbyshire conducted the service.

The Novice



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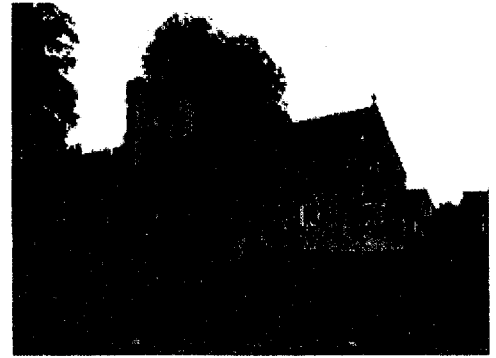
Morning sessions: daily, 9am – noon

Afternoon sessions: Tues, Wed and Thurs, noon – 3pm or 1pm – 3pm

Packed lunch session: daily, noon – 1pm

Contact: Kelly Targell – Pre-School Manager 01296 682217





**Services at
Saint James Church - Aston Abbotts
December 2014**

7th December	6.00pm	Evensong	Rev. Philip Derbyshire
14th December	10.30am	Communion	Rev. Peter Binns
	4.00pm	Christingle	Rev. Philip Derbyshire
21st December		No Service	
22nd December	6.00pm	Service of Carols	Rev. Philip Derbyshire
25th December	10.30am	Communion	Rev. Philip Derbyshire
28th December		No Service (*)	
4th January	6.00pm	Evensong	Rev. Philip Derbyshire

We look forward to seeing you

(*) There are Services at Wingrave (8am) and Wing (11am) on this Sunday.

100 Club Draw - November

1st Prize, £50

Jane Baylis

2nd prize, £10

Judy Hardcastle

FAMILY CHRISTMAS ACTIVITY MORNING

SATURDAY 13th December

10.00am to 12 noon in the Village Hall

Calling all families in Aston Abbotts.

Please come and help us make Christmas decorations for the Church. Our theme this year is '*Christmas Carols*' and we will be making decorations for the Church windows and for the Christmas tree. Refreshments will be available for all.

Put this date in your diary and we look forward to seeing you there. (Contact Caroline Abel Smith on 681001 or Gay Walker on 688632 for more information.)

ST JAMES CHURCH CHRISTINGLE SERVICE

SUNDAY 14th December 4.00 pm

Everyone is invited to come and help make a christingle and to join us singing carols by the light of the christingle candles.

ST JAMES CHURCH CAROL SERVICE

MONDAY 22nd December 6.00 pm

Come and join us as we celebrate the coming of Christmas with carols, readings and poems by candle light. Our Church will be decorated for the occasion by the children in the village. Everyone is welcome and we look forward to seeing you there.

Church Duties December

Cleaning

Flowers

Dec 7th Caroline L/ Colin

No Flowers

Dec 14th TBA

Christingle

Dec 20th Alex/Anita

Christmas Decorating

Dec 27th Colin/Gay

Christmas Decorating



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	Sondra Dickason	682249
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Royal Oak	Teri & Gary Moulton	681262
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Merry Christmas
To All Our Friends
In Aston Abbotts



& A Happy New Year
Alison & Dave Lewis